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Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on literacy for life: shaping future agendas

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on literacy for life: shaping future agendas, submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 68/132.

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Literacy for life: shaping future agendas

Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/132 adopted on 18 December 2013, in which the Assembly requested the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to reinforce its coordinating and catalysing role in the fight against illiteracy and to continue the process of elaborating a literacy vision and agenda for the period subsequent to the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), in consultation with Member States and development partners, in order to ensure a successful global multi-stakeholder partnership. It also requested the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of UNESCO, to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session a report on the implementation of resolution 68/132.

While substantial progress has been made, improving global literacy remains an enduring challenge, and the final evaluation of the United Nations Literacy Decade suggests that UNESCO should continue to play its catalytic and coordinating role at the global level to advance the literacy agenda. While continuing its activities to support national efforts and advocate for the inclusion of literacy as a target in the post-2015 global development agenda, five strategic axes are proposed to scale up literacy action worldwide following the Decade, including through a country-driven, community-owned and collaborative multi-stakeholder partnership.

I. Introduction

Call by the General Assembly for collaborative, multi-pronged action

1. The General Assembly, at its sixty-eighth session, commended the efforts made by Member States, development partners, the international donor community, the private sector, civil society and the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, including the lead organization of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), UNESCO, in making progress on the goals of the Decade, but also expressed deep concern that the world is facing a challenging unfinished literacy agenda. It outlined the vision of an inclusive, literate world in which all people have access to education in their own languages, where gender gaps are bridged, and where all children, young people and adults, including marginalized groups, have access to good quality education.

2. Through its resolution 68/132, the General Assembly adopted a holistic view of literacy and affirmed its conviction that literacy is crucial to the acquisition by every child, young person and adult of the essential life skills that will enable them to address the challenges that they may face in life and represents an essential condition of lifelong learning, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the knowledge societies and economies of the twenty-first century.

3. In the same resolution, the General Assembly recognized the importance of continuing to implement national programmes and measures to eliminate illiteracy worldwide and requested UNESCO to reinforce its coordinating and catalysing role in the fight against illiteracy. The Assembly also encouraged the Director-General of UNESCO to continue the process of elaborating a literacy vision and agenda for the period subsequent to the United Nations Literacy Decade, in consultation with Member States and development partners. Furthermore, it recognized the need to give appropriate consideration to the issue of literacy in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

4. The present report presents five strategic axes of action for literacy in the period subsequent to the Decade.

II. Sustaining and expanding the gains of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012)

A. United Nations Literacy Decade: an expanded vision of literacy

5. The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), proclaimed at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly in 2001 to support collective efforts to achieve the Education for All literacy goal, ended on 31 December 2012. The evaluation of the Decade highlighted its catalytic effect as a global framework for focused efforts for the promotion of literacy and literate environments. The Decade advanced an expanded vision of literacy as a foundation for further learning across the lifespan and underscored its importance as a development imperative. Throughout the Decade, a multisectoral approach to literacy was reinforced through focused attention on such themes as literacy and gender, literacy and sustainable development, literacy and health, literacy and empowerment, literacy and peace, and literacy and livelihoods. Literacy is now seen as a continuum of skill levels, from

basic to advanced, acquired throughout a lifespan, as opposed to being defined in terms of a simple dichotomy of "literacy" versus "illiteracy".

6. Basic literacy skills, comprising reading, writing and computing, are the foundational skills for effective functioning in today's text-mediated knowledge societies. UNESCO adopts an integrated and holistic approach to literacy, recognizing that its acquisition and development takes place before, during and after basic education, as well as out of school through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Literacy is a life-wide and lifelong learning process. It is a continuum of different levels of literacy, with the required minimum level of basic skills varying with the life context of individuals. Without these fundamental skills, people are at risk of being excluded from new and emerging possibilities to use information and communication technologies and other media for different purposes and to make informed life choices.

7. Notions of what constitutes a minimum threshold of functional literacy are changing as a result of progress in science and technology and the development of what have become known as "knowledge societies". Skills associated with the use of new digital media in our everyday lives are evolving and becoming more complex. This requires a broader approach to literacy and numeracy that includes a set of capabilities or key competences required in the information and digital age, and appropriate means of measuring these skill or competency levels.

B. Steady but uneven progress: an unfinished agenda

8. There has been steady progress in the global literacy landscape. Global literacy rates for those aged 15 to 24 years increased from 83 per cent in 1990 to 87 per cent in 2000 and 89 per cent in 2012. More adults aged 15 years and older are literate than previously, resulting in an increase from 76 per cent in 1990 to 82 per cent in 2000 and 84 per cent in 2012. The absolute number of non-literate adults fell from 884 million in 1990 to 787 million in 2000 and 781 million in 2012. However, this progress has been uneven across regions and countries. Three quarters of the world's non-literate adult population live in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, women still constitute two thirds of the world's non-literate population, a proportion that has remained unchanged over the past 20 years.

9. Literacy challenges are not limited to the developing countries; low literacy skills are also a concern in many high-income countries. The European Commission, for example, notes that in Europe an estimated 20 per cent of adults lack the literacy skills they need to function fully in a modern society.[1] Even in countries that have high literacy rates, there are regions or population groups that have inadequate levels of literacy. For instance, in countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), between 4.9 per cent and 27.7 per cent of adults are proficient at only the lowest levels in literacy and 8.1 per cent to 31.7 per cent are proficient at only the lowest levels in numeracy.[2]

10. Based on current trends, 751 million adults, including 103 million young people aged 15 to 24 years, will lack basic literacy skills in 2015. Only 36 countries and territories are likely to reach or exceed Education for All goal 4 (Achieving a

[1] See http://euskillspanorama.ec.europa.eu.

[2] See http://skills.oecd.org/documents/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf.

50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults).

11. Inefficient school systems add a critical dimension to the global literacy challenge. Some 58 million children of primary school age and 63 million children of lower secondary school age were out of school in 2012.[3] Furthermore, an estimated 250 million children of primary school age, nearly half of whom do not reach grade four, are not acquiring basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics,[4] adding to the existing pool of the non-literate population.

12. Clearly, literacy is a truly global challenge and a huge unfinished agenda that must be urgently addressed. In today's text-mediated knowledge economies, lacking literacy skills is a grim denial of the right to basic education and results in the severe marginalization of large population groups, especially women. Addressing the multiple literacy needs of all age groups must remain a sustainable international commitment. As the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative recognizes, "Inequality is at the heart of the global education emergency. If we do not act swiftly, educational disparities will become an even greater source of division — both within and between countries".[5] A literate world is, in many ways, one of the first steps towards a peaceful, inclusive, sustainable world. Given the determining role that literacy and numeracy play in increasing the life chances of individuals, improving family welfare and contributing to the development of nations, UNESCO believes that the uneven progress in improving youth and adult literacy, especially for women, represents huge missed opportunities at all levels of society.

C. Five factors affecting the achievement of literacy and literate environments

13. UNESCO recognizes at least five key factors that must be addressed to achieve the goal of attaining quality literacy for all as a foundation for lifelong learning, with the ultimate goal of creating a fully literate world.

14. First, literacy is not adequately integrated into sector-wide and multisectoral education and development strategies. As a result, attention, action and fund flows within countries and from the development partners to literacy are largely inadequate.

15. Second, quality literacy programmes must be scaled up comprehensively and innovatively in order to address the literacy needs of diverse populations. Promoting the participation of communities and learners in all aspects of literacy provision, professionalizing literacy providers and managers, producing quality literacy materials, developing quality indicators for literacy and using information and communication technologies would accelerate the pace and quality of progress.

[3] See http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/oosc-2014-progress-stalled-on-reaching-upe.aspx.

[4] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/14: Teaching and Learning: Achieving quality for all* (2014). See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf.

[5] See http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/files/GEFI_Brochure_ENG.pdf.

16. Third, owing to their often poor quality, many education systems continue to "graduate" learners who have not acquired sustainable literacy skills. As indicated in paragraph 11 above, in addition to the 121 million out-of-school children, 250 million learners, nearly half of whom do not reach grade four, are failing to acquire the basics in primary school.

17. Fourth, weak literate environments fail to reinforce basic literacy skills acquired through diverse pathways. The use of literacy skills should be nurtured in all significant contexts, including the family, schools, communities and workplaces, and for different purposes. Developing literacy-rich environments and a literate culture, particularly in multilingual contexts, would help to create a more inclusive and sustainable literate world.

18. Fifth, women's literacy is an issue of high concern. The active participation of women in designing, implementing and assessing programmes needs to be promoted. Literacy must be associated with empowerment through the promotion of women's legal rights and income-generation activities.

III. Five strategic axes to shape a new agenda

19. UNESCO will continue to play the catalytic role it has played over the past six decades. Through its vision of fundamental education (adopted by UNESCO at the first session of its General Conference in 1947), its experimental world literacy programme (UNESCO programme in the late 1960s and early 1970s) and its leading role at the global education summits held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and in Dakar in 2000, it has been a champion of literacy. As lead coordinator of the United Nations Literacy Decade, it has drawn the attention of countries and regions around the world to the transformative potential of literacy. In order to accelerate the pace of progress, the organization launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment 2006-2015 targeting 36 countries. The UNESCO literacy assessment and monitoring programme helped to create an improved understanding of literacy levels in diverse settings.

20. Through the Belém Framework for Action adopted in 2009 at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, Member States have committed to redouble efforts to meet Education for All goal 4. Recently, the High-level International Round Table on Literacy (Paris, September, 2012) and the colloquium on advancing towards a literate twenty-first century (Paris, September 2013), both held at UNESCO, have spurred reinforced commitment.

21. Five strategic axes, building on past and recent initiatives and taking into consideration the emerging challenges, are proposed for the global literacy agenda in the period subsequent to the Decade:

- Developing the capacities of Member States in the areas of policies, programme delivery and literacy assessments
- Scaling up literacy actions for girls and women
- Reinforcing innovative modes of literacy delivery, including through the use of information and communication technologies
- Expanding the knowledge base and monitoring and evaluation

- Advocating for literacy on the global agenda and ensuring synergies between different actions, including through a multi-stakeholder partnership and networks.

A. Developing the capacities of Member States in the areas of policies, programme delivery and literacy assessments

22. Following up on the Paris communiqué on scaling up literacy that came out of the High-level International Round Table on Literacy (2012), 36 countries have demonstrated their commitment to scaling up literacy programmes. UNESCO will continue to work with these countries to consolidate and expand the gains already made.

23. Part of this work relates to policy development and ensuring that literacy is integrated into sector-wide and multisectoral education and development strategies. Over the past few years, UNESCO has supported a number of sub-Saharan African countries, including Chad, Rwanda and South Sudan, to integrate literacy and non-formal education into the education sector and national development plans. Similarly, in Asia and the Pacific, national literacy action plans that respond to current literacy challenges have been developed, with support from UNESCO, in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Iraq, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. Countries in the Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean have also been supported. UNESCO will continue to assist countries to review their education policies and develop appropriate policy instruments and strategies to better address the educational needs of diverse population groups. Through its programme on capacity development for education for all, UNESCO is currently supporting 11 countries through major literacy capacity development interventions. With the financial support of donors, UNESCO will continue to scale up these actions and give particular focus to the design and implementation of literacy and non-formal education policies, strategies and programmes. Examples of achievements to date include support to Nigeria's efforts to revitalize youth and adult literacy programmes, the use of evidence-based planning to develop the three-year Country Literacy Acceleration Plan complemented by provincial literacy acceleration plans in Cambodia and the revision or development of national literacy strategies in Mauritania, Rwanda and South Sudan.

24. In addition to national interventions, UNESCO will continue to support international literacy policy forums such as the one organized in 2013 with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture on literacy and life skills education for vulnerable youth through community learning centres, at which more than 120 government officials, youth representatives and civil society stakeholders from 17 countries shared their experiences in implementing effective practices.

25. Building on the achievements of past technical support provided by UNESCO and its Institute for Lifelong Learning in over 40 countries, UNESCO will continue to engage with countries to enhance the competence of literacy instructors, develop curricular frameworks, improve the management and monitoring of literacy programmes and transform community learning centres and other community-based institutions into hubs of lifelong learning. UNESCO will, for example, continue to support the Government of Afghanistan in implementing the programme for the enhancement of literacy in Afghanistan, which currently provides literacy education

to 640,000 non-literate youth and adults in 18 provinces, 60 per cent of whom are women. In addition, it will continue to support the Government in implementing the programme on literacy for empowering the Afghan police, which is aimed at ensuring the quality of existing police literacy classes through institutional capacity-building of the Literacy Unit of the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

26. Seven Arab States[6] are implementing literacy and non-formal education programmes through an array of contextually appropriate strategies. In 2013, a regional centre for literacy and adult education was established in Egypt as a UNESCO category 2 centre to provide resource support to countries in the region. The "Literacy enhancement Arab programme" was developed in 2012 as a platform for Arab States to share experiences and develop joint programmes, and UNESCO will continue to support regional cooperation in this field.

27. Following up on work already undertaken in several countries (such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chad, Mauritania, Nepal and Rwanda), UNESCO will continue to work on increasing the availability of reliable data and enhancing capacities to manage non-formal education management information systems or integrated education management information systems.

28. Within the framework of the fellowship and scholarship programmes of the International Conference on Adult Education organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UNESCO will continue to train senior adult education experts to enhance the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action in their countries and encourage knowledge transfer in their respective countries and contexts.

29. UNESCO will continue to assist Member States to develop reliable measures of literacy and generate data that are comparable across time and disaggregated by age, sex, disability, socioeconomic status and other relevant factors, drawing upon the expertise of the UNESCO Institutes, UNESCO chairs and networks and expert practitioners. In particular, UNESCO will continue to support countries to improve literacy assessments. A number of such initiatives have already been implemented, most notably through the first phase of the literacy assessment and monitoring programme implemented in Jordan, Mongolia, Paraguay and the State of Palestine; through the programme "Action research measuring learning outcomes of adult literacy programmes", which is supporting countries to develop culturally and linguistically sensitive measurement instruments in Burkina Faso, Mali, Morocco, the Niger and Senegal; and the Pacific islands literacy and numeracy assessment, conducted in 14 Pacific island States and territories.

B. Scaling up literacy actions for girls and women

30. Increased attention must be given to scaling up literacy for girls and women. The level of female adult illiteracy has remained unchanged over the past two decades at 64 per cent. 496 million of the world's adult illiterate population. In 68 countries with data, the poorest young women are projected to achieve universal literacy only in 2072.[4] UNESCO will therefore continue to strengthen advocacy for the education of girls and women, build strategic partnerships, fundraise and implement targeted programmes for girls and women.

[6] Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan and Yemen.

31. In 2011, UNESCO launched the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, known as "Better Life, Better Future", with the support of world leaders such as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh and former United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, guided by the conviction that educating girls and women can break the cycle of poverty and foster greater social justice. The Partnership seeks to increase learning opportunities for adolescent girls and women and to find solutions to some of the deep-rooted challenges and obstacles to their education. Particular emphasis is given to expanding and improving the quality of education for girls and women at the secondary level and in the area of literacy, taking successful initiatives to scale and replicating good practice.

32. Under this initiative, UNESCO has established dynamic partnerships to support marginalized girls and women in Africa and Asia. Important partners have joined the Partnership since it was launched and the number continues to grow. These include the Governments of Italy, Japan, Pakistan and the United States of America, the Varkey GEMS Foundation, Hainan Airlines, Nokia, the Packard Foundation, Procter & Gamble and the Barefoot College. UNESCO will continue to expand and strengthen its network of partners. One example is its Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education, which was established in December 2012 and is aimed at expanding access for girls to education by improving the quality and relevance of basic education and strengthening policy implementation at the national, provincial and community levels, thus ensuring the right to quality basic education and safe learning environments.

33. An example of the organization's operational work under the global partnership is the UNESCO literacy project for girls and women in Senegal. This project has adopted an array of innovative teaching methods and has successfully implemented literacy courses through mobile phones, computers, the Internet and television that, coupled with vocational skills training, have proved effective in reaching out to non-literate and neo-literate women. It is a partnership between the Government of Senegal, UNESCO and the multinational private sector company Procter & Gamble. Launched in January 2012, the project is aimed at improving access to education for 40,000 neo-literate and illiterate women aged 15 to 55 years in Senegal. Based on the success of the project in Senegal, a similar literacy project was launched in Nigeria in March 2014; it is aimed at benefiting 60,000 girls and women in the Federal Capital Territory and Rivers State within the next three years.

C. Reinforcing innovative modes of literacy delivery, including through the use of information and communication technologies

34. As information and communication technologies become more accessible and affordable, mobile technology is increasingly common in areas where women are underserved and education is scarce. Current estimates from the United Nations indicate that 6 billion out of the 7 billion people living today have access to a working mobile phone (International Telecommunication Union, 2012). UNESCO believes that, although it is not a panacea, mobile technology offers a promising vehicle for improving education, in terms of both access and quality. Experiences in countries such as Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Senegal show that mobile phones could open innovative possibilities for reaching unreached populations. In those countries, literacy programmes and teacher training were facilitated by mobile

phones. A 2014 UNESCO study, "Reading in the mobile era", shows that in countries with high illiteracy rates, where people often suffer from a lack of readily available reading materials, those with literacy skills often read books and stories from small screen devices, pointing to the potential for mobile learning even in remote and poor areas.

35. UNESCO has been drawing on effective practices for mobilizing the potential of mobile technologies in breaking through the economic and cultural barriers to literacy education for women and girls. Nine in-depth case studies across four regions that analyse enablers for the successful use of mobile technologies in advancing literacy education for women and girls have been completed. UNESCO has been working with Governments, local community centres and the private sector to build mobile learning systems that make literacy programmes accessible on a large scale by out-of-school children and adults through mobile phones. Mobile learning systems also enable flexible learning by adults, who are able to access it at any time the learners are available and anywhere they feel safe and comfortable. UNESCO has developed mobile literacy programmes in Myanmar, Nigeria and Thailand and is expanding them to more countries.

36. Every year since 2012, UNESCO organizes Mobile Learning Week, a flagship UNESCO conference on mobile technologies and education. In 2013, literacy was one of the themes of Mobile Learning Week. In partnership with major international technology companies, UNESCO brought together more than 700 participants representing a diverse group of stakeholders from over 60 countries to consider how affordable and widespread mobile technologies can advance education. For Mobile Learning Week 2015, UNESCO will partner with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), convening stakeholders to share effective practices in using mobile devices to empower women and girls. This overarching theme will be underscored by four sub-themes: equitable access to mobile technologies, gender-sensitive pedagogy, mobile literacy education, and skills development through mobiles.

37. Open and distance learning, drawing on the availability of cloud computing, mobile technologies and user-generated local language content, could be useful in making quality literacy learning more accessible and contextually relevant.

38. Furthermore, UNESCO will reinforce its partnership with the Hewlett Foundation, the Commonwealth of Learning and other stakeholders to catalyse the process of developing and deploying online open educational resources and courseware to enable countries to scale up literacy programmes.

D. Expanding the knowledge base and monitoring and evaluation

39. As the clearinghouse for literacy, UNESCO will gather, transfer, disseminate and share available information, knowledge and effective practices in the field of literacy, as well as identify and pilot innovative approaches. It will advocate for the strengthening of literate environments to sustain initial literacy and support the vision of literacy as a continuum. UNESCO, in particular through its specialized entities such as the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, will, for example, continue to share the knowledge base on effective literacy policies and programmes. Through the literacy and basic skills mailing list managed by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, news and

research evidence related to the field are currently being disseminated to almost 700 subscribers.

40. UNESCO will seek to expand the database on effective literacy and numeracy practices,[7] which already contains more than 170 case studies from all regions. Recent publications include *Literacy Programmes with a focus on women to reduce gender disparities*;[8] a study on successful approaches to reducing gender disparities in and through literacy; four policy briefs[9] on the status of literacy teachers; literacy and life skills for youth; empowering literacy programmes for women; and community-based provision for young people; as well as *Sustaining Literacy in Africa: Developing a Literate Environment*. UNESCO will continue to produce policy briefs with key messages for policymakers and decision-makers based on good practices and lessons learned.

41. Departing from the business-as-usual approach, UNESCO will seek and promote cutting-edge innovative solutions to increase access to relevant and functional literacy skills education required for the citizens of the twenty-first century. It will build a community of practitioners focused on creating, delivering and monitoring literacy learning, including through strengthened partnerships.

42. Since 1967, nearly 460 effective practices displaying outstanding merit in increasing literacy levels and contributing to creating literate environments have been awarded the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes. Through the two international literacy prizes awarded annually (the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize and the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy), the organization collects good practices in literacy and documents information on the winning programmes. UNESCO will continue to award these international prizes and disseminate good practices throughout the global literacy and education community.

43. The second *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* is a key instrument assessing progress in the worldwide International Conference on Adult Education follow-up process. The report, entitled *Rethinking Literacy*, was produced in 2013[10] on the basis of national reports from 139 Member States. The second *Global Report* was launched globally and in all regions, in cooperation with the International Council for Adult Education and with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. In view of the social, environmental, demographic and economic challenges of the twenty-first century, the second *Global Report* underscores the indispensable need for continuous learning, with literacy as its critical foundation. It recommends building bridges between policy and research, improving governance by involving all relevant actors, building capacities for coordination and decentralized implementation, innovative strategies for mobilizing resources, designing monitoring frameworks and instituting professionalization.

44. UNESCO will support Member States in monitoring and evaluating literacy policies and programmes against agreed priorities and targets and in developing appropriate indicators for measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of policies and programmes. UNESCO will also support Member States in continuously improving

[7] See http://www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/.

[8] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002225/222588e.pdf.

[9] See http://uil.unesco.org/home/programme-areas/literacy-and-basic-skills/.

[10] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002224/222407E.pdf.

methodologies and mechanisms for the collection and analysis of relevant literacy data and ensure coherence between national data collection and international standards and initiatives. Particular focus will be placed on institutional capacities for the use of information from monitoring and evaluation to inform strategies and programmes, standards and curriculums or to adjust learning methods.

E. Advocating for literacy on the global agenda and ensuring synergies between different actions, including through a multi-stakeholder partnership and networks

45. UNESCO will continue to build political commitment and engage all key stakeholders to make progress on improving literacy rates around the world, especially in countries that are at risk of not achieving the internationally agreed goals.

46. The UNESCO position paper on the post-2015 education agenda[11] identifies literacy as a priority area that enables individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully in their community and wider society. Building upon this, the Education for All Steering Committee, a representative body of key international education stakeholders convened by UNESCO, has developed a comprehensive new vision for education beyond 2015.

47. In the Muscat Agreement, which was adopted by over 250 delegates at the Global Education for All Meeting held in Muscat, Oman from 12 to 14 May 2014, education leaders endorsed a shared vision of a future education agenda, outlining an overarching goal and a set of seven global targets for education post-2015. The following literacy target was proposed: "By 2030, all youth and at least x% of adults reach a proficiency level in literacy and numeracy sufficient to fully participate in society, with particular attention to girls and women and the most marginalized."

48. Moreover, civil society organizations added their weight to the new education agenda by voicing their support for the proposed education goal and draft targets at the meeting of the UNESCO Collective Consultation of Non-governmental Organizations on Education for All (Santiago de Chile, 21 to 23 May 2014). The group, representing some 300 organizations from all over the world, also pledged to continue mobilizing support and increasing advocacy for education both from within and outside of the education community.

49. The proposed targets will be the basis of a framework for action, to be developed by UNESCO in consultation with all Education for All partners. The framework will guide the implementation of a future education agenda and identify both indicators for the global targets and country-specific targets and indicators, reflecting diverse social, political, economic and cultural contexts.

50. In order to accelerate the pace and make a tangible difference to literacy levels across the world, it is evident that the "business as usual" approach will not work, nor can UNESCO achieve results without multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships.

51. To this end, UNESCO intends to consult Member States further on the establishment of a global partnership on literacy as part of the global education

[11] See http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED_new/UNESCOPosition PaperOnEDpost-2015.pdf.

movement. The two main objectives of the partnership would be to (a) improve literacy outcomes in countries through collaborative action networks at the international, regional, national and local levels; and (b) integrate literacy learning within a national institutional framework for lifelong learning opportunities.

52. The partnership will involve different types of stakeholders (such as countries, the private sector, foundations and civil society) that wish to prioritize literacy as a key development imperative and are willing to work collaboratively to find systemic solutions to work towards building inclusive and sustainable communities through enhancing literacy and lifelong learning opportunities. It will also build upon existing initiatives such as the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative, where different stakeholders such as Member States, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies and the private sector are working together to put children in school and improving quality of learning. The partners[12] will be encouraged to make commitments relating to policy reform, financial allocation, advocacy, service and product delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and/or research and innovation.

53. UNESCO will provide a convening platform for policy dialogue and for sharing national commitments, strategies, programmes and outcomes, analyse promising practices and provide solutions-oriented guidance. In sum, UNESCO will use its long-standing experience and commitment to literacy to lead, support and sustain the multi-stakeholder partnership that will help make new and demonstrable gains in the coming years.

54. UNESCO will support countries to generate evidence on the intrinsic and instrumental value of literacy and encourage them to give due consideration to literacy in the preparation of the post-2015 development agenda and its inclusion as one of the key goals in the global education and development agenda.

IV. Recommendations

55. **Based on the present report, the following recommendations may be considered by the General Assembly:**

(a) **Recognize literacy as a foundation for lifelong learning as well as a building block for achieving basic human rights and sustainable development;**

(b) **Encourage Governments to seek innovative solutions to accelerate literacy efforts and create institutional frameworks and systems for literacy and lifelong learning, and translate political commitment into dependable financing, robust programming and improvement-oriented monitoring;**

(c) **Call upon countries, development partners, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and civil society to promote literacy and literate environments;**

(d) **Express its support to the five strategic axes proposed for the global literacy agenda;**

[12] Member State government agencies and representatives, United Nations and other multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, regional organizations, UNESCO chairs, non-governmental organizations, private sector and private foundations, experts (for example, universities, research institutes and think tanks) and other civil society organizations.

(e) **Urge countries to consider integrating literacy into the post-2015 global development and education agenda as an education and development imperative;**

(f) **Encourage UNESCO to continue to strengthen its role in coordinating and catalysing global efforts towards scaling up literacy in the period subsequent to the United Nations Literacy Decade.**